

EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Meeting of December 3, 2008

Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Members Present: Kim Bobola, Ph.D. (Chair); Bill Strassberger (Parliamentarian); Colleen Ionata (Vice Chair); David Kochanski, Esq.; G. Stanley Doore; Allan Mulligan; John Thomas; Vanessa Ali; Sheala Durant; Eric Luedtke; Alfreda Hunt Payne, Ph.D.; Anthony Ramirez; Benoy Thomas; John Fausti, Esq.; Marva R. Deskins, Esq.; and Amjad Chaudhry.

Members Absent: Thomas Aylward and Dwayne Parris.

Staff: Anise Key Brown (Director, Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center) and Gwen Haney (Program Specialist, EMRSC)

Guests: Mara M. Parker (Staff, Councilmember Marc Elrich's office), Frank Caruso (Greencastle Lakes Community Association, GLCA), Barbara Foresti (White Oak Master Plan/Quaint Acres), Matt Zaborsky (Vice Chair, Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board), Frank Altrichter, Terry Bork (East County Recreation Advisory Board), Robert Jepson (Adventist Health Care), Jeff Morgan (Adventist Health Care).

Citizen's Forum: Chair Bobola welcomed everyone. Guests were asked to introduce themselves to the Board and address any concerns or issues that they had.

- **Barbara Foresti** stated that the *recycle day* held at EMRSC in November was fantastic and that she would like to see it repeated.
- **A concerned citizen** wanted to know if there are plans by the county or state to change the alignment of Tech Road, and said he would like to see a change in the timing of the lights at the adjacent shopping center. In response to these issues, the question about the alignment of Tech Road would be looked into, and the request to change the timing of the lights would be passed along.

Call to Order: The chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chair Bobola then introduced the evening's speakers who were representing the Washington Adventist Hospital (WAH). The purpose of the presentation was to update the Board on the progress of the hospital relocation to East County.

Speakers:

Robert Jepson (WAH) provided a background review of the basis for the hospital's relocation referring primarily to its current inaccessibility and insufficient size. The new site encompasses 40 acres on Plum Orchard Drive. WAH plans to keep the current location in Takoma Park, using it as a center for healthcare and community service.

Jeff Morgan, who is in charge of the relocation project, explained that the process to date has involved two steps, the first being to obtain a **special exception** for the right to develop a hospital on the new site off of Cherry Hill. In September, the Board of Appeals issued this approval.

The second step is to obtain State **approval of the site plan**. The site plan encompasses 300 private-bed rooms, a full service emergency department, two medical/physician buildings, two parking structures, an outpatient center, a possible future wellness and fitness center, and a parcel for a possible future fire station. The site plan approval requires state regulatory approval of a “certification of need.”

A preliminary site plan review with the Montgomery County Planning Board will take place tomorrow, December 4th. Planned achievement of this step in the process at the State level is by April 2009. Afterward, building permits can be obtained and construction can begin. Groundbreaking is intended to start in 2010 with construction completion in 2013.

The floor was opened for questions:

- **John Fausti** asked about the architect’s credentials. Mr. Morgan responded that the architect, RTKL Associates, Inc., has done many such projects, including ones at the neighboring Food and Drug Administration campus.
- **Allan Mulligan** asked about the order of the process; namely, why the special exception (permitted use) came before the certification of need. Mr. Morgan advised that this was to have a well-prepared and thought-through plan for its submission to the State for review and approval.
- **Eric Luedtke** asked if transportation access had been considered. Mr. Morgan responded that access is provided by both Metro and Ride On, and that WAH is working with the County to implement additional access plans that meet County approval.
- **David Kochanski** asked why it takes 12 months for the review process when this is a “relocation” project rather than a “new” hospital. Mr. Morgan responded that it is required to move intensive/acute care services.
- **Colleen Ionata** asked how the traffic flow will impact the community. Mr. Morgan explained that a comprehensive traffic study, which can be found on the WAH website, has been done, and that they will commit to doing whatever is required to address traffic issues.
- **Frank Caruso** (who represents GLCA) asked if WAH had considered making the old hospital campus in Takoma Park a healthcare education site. Mr Morgan replied that they are working closely with a nearby college, and believe that health education will be a component of that campus. He added that they are looking for tenants that align with their vision for the reuse plan.

- **Bill Strassberger** mentioned an article in the day's *Washington Post* regarding issues with the planned community in Clarksburg, and asked if the Clarksburg property owned by WAH has a connection to these issues. Mr Morgan acknowledged WAH has property in Clarksburg, but said there is no connection. The plan for their (WAH) property is to develop a health care facility.

Mr. Morgan closed by saying they will continue to work through community organizations (as a means of hearing and informing the community). They will also be seeking letters of support from groups like the East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB).

Approval of Minutes:

Chair Bobola asked for a review of the minutes of the ECCAB Meeting of November 5.

[December 3, 2008 - 1] A motion to approve the minutes of November 5 was offered. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Introduction of new Board member: Chair Bobola

The Chair introduced and welcomed Amjad Chaudhry as the Board's newest member. Mr. Chaudhry shared a brief autobiography.

Director's Report: Anise Key Brown

The Director made the following announcements:

- An indoor Yard Sale to benefit the Eastern Montgomery Emergency Assistance Network (E MEAN) will be held on Saturday, December 6th at the East County Community Recreation Center;
- Free legal advice clinics are being held at EMRSC on the first and second Thursday evening of each month;
- Two Montgomery College courses (Spanish I and Creative Writing) will be offered at EMRSC beginning in February 2009;
- EMRSC's Job Fair, held on November 6, 2008, was attended by approximately 600 job seekers, and also featured as lead news story on Channel 4;
- A new Fire Chief is needed to replace Tom Carr who has moved to his home town of Charleston, South Carolina, to take a position there as Fire & Rescue Chief. The site selection for a new firehouse in the East County region is on hold until a new fire chief has been appointed;
- Thanks were conveyed to Chair Bobola for testifying on behalf of ECCAB regarding the Planning Board's mandatory review for the new Recreation Center at White Oak;
- The Planning Board approved the county's plan for the White Oak Recreation Center.

- EMRSC will serve as a site for the Martin Luther King (MLK) Day of Service. Volunteers are being sought and may participate in projects that are educational and/or service-oriented;
- Board members were reminded that they also serve as advisors to the Director; thanks were expressed to Stan Doore for consulting with the Director on ICC-related issues; and
- A budget update on county Capital Improvement Projects in our region was disseminated.

Chair's Report: Kim Bobola

- Announced that, in addition to herself, Barbara Foresti (present) provided testimony before the Montgomery County Planning Board regarding the 11-year-long effort to bring a new recreation center to White Oak;
- Responded to a question from Sheala Durant regarding what topics in the approval process were of most concern in the community. Chair Bobola identified 1) increased pedestrian traffic and associated problems, and 2) a possible increase in crime. She explained that the county government has agreed to look at widening sidewalks and revisiting bus schedules and bus stops in response to the former. Regarding the latter, there is some thought that the increase in activities for youth may have the effect of lowering crime. A discussion followed about the relationship of public transportation access and increased crime. The two may not be related.
- Emphasized the importance of Board's committee meetings (scheduled to be held on the Wednesday following the monthly ECCAB meeting) as designated times when most of the Board's work is done.
- Advised that the East County Leadership Summit report is nearing completion. One subcommittee report is outstanding. When the Summit report is completed, it will serve as the basis for developing a long-range Action Plan.

Mara Parker (for Councilmember Elrich)

- County Council is tentatively scheduled to support the application for Community Legacy Funding from the State for the Burtonsville Legacy Plan.
- In January, the County Council will be holding a public hearing on the Intercounty Connector (ICC) regarding bikeways and interchanges.
- Projected budget deficits for next year may be as high as \$600 million, with a corresponding 45% increase in the cost of core services.
- A brief discussion ensued about the proposed emergency medical services transport fee, which is currently tabled. It was mentioned that ECCAB was the only regional citizens' advisory board to take a position in support of the proposal.

Committee Reports

Services Committee: Anthony Ramirez, Chair

- No meeting was held due to committee members' involvement in several community outreach initiatives.
- Anthony Ramirez reported on his attendance at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)/community meeting of November 12. Currently 3,000 FDA staff members are employed there, with 8000 projected by 2013. Transportation was addressed; 3 metro bus routes, as well as a continual shuttle route, are serving the campus. They are supporting additional sidewalks at the Four Corners area on Route 29. There is talk of collaboration with Washington Adventist Hospital (WAH). Additionally, FDA has been commended for some building-design awards.
- Chair Bobola added that, as a future agenda item, ECCAB is planning a tour of FDA on a Saturday in the spring of 2009.
- Colleen Ionata reported on her attendance at a Northwest Branch Recreation Park Master Plan meeting on the recreation park next to the Trolley Museum. Topics discussed included bike paths, environmental impact, and the intent of the community to maintain a "natural" appearance. The museum structure is erect and plans to open in 2009.

Outreach Committee: Marva Deskins, Chair

- Marva Deskins explained this group's goal is to become more visible to the community. As such, committee members will be attending more community association and PTA meetings.
- Allan Mulligan reported on his attendance at the Burtonsville Elementary School PTA meeting where Delegate Herman Taylor was a guest speaker. Among the statistics he provided was a comparison of state aid per pupil. For Montgomery County it is \$3,791 per pupil, as compared to \$11,214 for Baltimore City and \$3,088 for Talbot County.¹
- Benoy Thomas attended n Health and Human Services Budget meeting and relayed an across-the-board plea to have needs met.
- Bill Strassberger attended the Paint Branch PTA meeting where school traffic safety was a major topic. He reported that a traffic light, improved signage, and uniform speed limits, as well as a crosswalk at Old Columbia Pike, are planned for the new school.

¹ Department of Legislative Services (January, 2007). Bridge to Excellence Formulas, State Aid Structure Results, p. 21.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee: John Thomas

- The Committee worked on the draft letter regarding the Bus Rapid Transit proposal.
- Eric Luedtke attended a meeting of the Fairland Estates Community, also attended by County Executive Leggett and Director Art Holmes (Transportation Department), regarding the recent traffic fatality and related safety concerns. He reported that, by the end of next year, two traffic lights and pedestrian islands will be added in this area.

Chair Bobola asked Board members for feedback regarding the expanded attendance at community meetings and subsequent reports back to the Board (Is it working?). Bill Strassberger noted that it may be helpful to have feedback in writing. Sheala Durant stated it is very informative and if the reported information could be provided prior to the meeting, it may allow more thought for questions. It was also suggested that having summaries in writing would assist with compiling annual reports.

Chair Bobola suggested that Quad assignments have the potential to serve a similar purpose, and could be revisited in the future.

Old Business : None

New Business: None

Announcements

Stan Doore passed out information regarding elevated bikeways and rail. The suggestion was made by the Chair to discuss them further in committees and bring the committee's view to the Board.

Bill Strassberger brought to the Board's attention an article in the Gazette regarding recent homicides allegedly committed by illegal immigrants. The article discussed that the county State's Attorney, John J. McCarthy, county police chief and other county leaders are considering stricter guidelines for handling suspects of serious crimes who are in the country illegally. A suggestion was made to invite John McCarthy to serve as a guest speaker at an ECCAB in the spring.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

The next meeting of ECCAB is scheduled for January 7, 2009.